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LETTER DATED 11 FEBRUARY 1997 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you, for the information of members of the Security Council, a copy of a letter from Mr. Tekeda Alemu, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, addressed to Mrs. Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, regarding the concerted campaign of terror and atrocities by the authorities of the Government of the Sudan against innocent Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan.

While committing atrocities against innocent Ethiopian refugees in its territory, the regime in the Sudan is at the same time actively engaged in a propaganda campaign by levelling false accusations against Ethiopia and its defence forces. These false accusations against Ethiopia are nothing but a ploy to cover up the acts of terror and intimidation that the Sudanese regime is currently perpetrating against innocent Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan.

I should be most grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Berhanemeskel NEGA
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

* Reissued for technical reasons.

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Annex

Letter dated 10 February 1997 from the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia addressed to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

I would like to express my greetings and best wishes to you and to bring to your attention the following matter of serious and urgent concern to my Government.

As you are probably well aware, the security authorities of the Government of the Sudan have been engaged, during the last few weeks, in a concerted campaign of rounding up and detaining Ethiopian refugees residing in different places within the territory of the Sudan. The Government of Ethiopia has received reliable information that the detained bona fide refugees have been subjected to all kinds of physical and mental torture. We have also learned that because of the harassment by the security officials, as well as the inhuman treatment that the detainees are subjected to within the Sudanese prisons, the entire Ethiopian refugee population in the Sudan is living under constant fear. As a result, many refugees have been forced to abandon their jobs and hide themselves in order to avoid arrest and torture by the Sudanese security officials.

The Sudanese authorities have rounded up in the town of Kassala and its vicinity more than 1,000 refugees from their work places, residences and refugee camps for deportation. Furthermore, the Government of the Sudan has recently informed our Embassy in Khartoum of its decisions to deport 27 Ethiopian refugees without explicitly stating how and when they will be deported. As we were very much concerned for the safety of these refugees, we have requested the Regional Liaison Office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Addis Ababa to make the necessary arrangements for their safe return.

While committing these atrocities on innocent Ethiopian refugees residing in its territory, the Government of the Sudan is at the same time actively engaged in a diplomatic and propaganda campaign alleging that Ethiopian troops are holding as hostage thousands of Sudanese citizens at the eastern border of the Sudan. This blatant lie is nothing but a ploy to cover up the campaign of terror and intimidation that it is currently conducting against innocent Ethiopian refugees. The regime in the Sudan is once again attempting to hoodwink the international community with a view to diverting attention from the actual problem of gross violations of human rights currently going on on a massive scale within its territory.

In view of the imminent danger facing Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan, I would like to request you to take urgent measures to resume the repatriation process of the remaining Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan. In the meantime, I appeal to you to use your good offices and influence on the Government of the Sudan to end its campaign of torture, terror and intimidation against Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan.

(Signed) Tekeda ALEMU
Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Federal Democratic Republic
of Ethiopia